

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
for the
Middle District of Tennessee

United States of America
v.

COLE REED HESTER

Case No. 22-mj-1034

Defendant(s)

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of September 2019 through July 2020 in the county of Montgomery in the
Middle District of Tennessee, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section

Offense Description

18 U.S.C. Section 2252A(a)(2)
18 U.S.C. Section 2252A(a)(5)(B)

Receipt and Distribution of Child Pornography
Possession of Child Pornography

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See Attached Affidavit

☐ Continued on the attached sheet.

Jonathan A Hendrix
Complainant's signature

Jonathan A. Hendrix, Special Agent, HSI
Printed name and title

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date: February 14, 2022

City and state: Nashville, TN

Barbara D. Holmes
Judge's signature

U.S. Magistrate Judge, Barbara D. Holmes
Printed name and title



AFFIDAVIT OF SPECIAL AGENT JONATHAN HENDRIX

I, Jonathan Hendrix, first being duly sworn and upon my oath state the following:

1. I am a Special Agent (SA) of the United States Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and I am assigned to the Office of the Special Agent in Charge in Nashville, Tennessee. HSI is responsible for enforcing federal criminal statutes involving the sexual exploitation of children under Title 18, United States Code, Section 2251, et seq. I have been employed as a Special Agent of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security since its inception in 2003. Prior to this employment, I was a Special Agent with the United States Customs Service. I am a graduate of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center's Criminal Investigator Training Program and the United States Customs Service Basic Enforcement School, where I received training in the investigation of child pornography and other violations of law. During the course of my duties, I have been the investigating officer and affiant of applications for search/arrest warrants relating to federal and state child pornography investigations.

2. This affidavit is submitted in support of a Criminal Complaint for the arrest of **COLE R. HESTER ("HESTER")**, for the following offenses: receipt and distribution of child pornography, in violation of Title 18, United States Code § 2252A(a)(2); and possession of child pornography in violation of Title 18, United States Code § 2252A(a)(5)(B).

3. The following information contained in this affidavit is based on my training and experience, my personal participation in this investigation and, information provided to me by other law enforcement officials. Unless otherwise indicated, where I have referred to written or oral statements, I have summarized them in substance and in part, rather than verbatim. Not all of the facts of the investigation known to me are contained herein, only those necessary to establish probable cause for the arrest of **HESTER**.

4. In February and June 2020, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) received CyberTipline Reports from Snapchat and Dropbox regarding possession/distribution of suspected child sexual abuse material (“CSAM”). The accounts related to the Reports included the following:

- a. Snapchat screen/user name: c.hester; Phone: 618-406-XXX¹; Date of Birth: X/X/1996; Email address: coletrain1010@yahoo.com; IP address: 68.32.254.9
- b. Dropbox screen/user name: Cole Hester; Email address: coletrain1010@yahoo.com (verified)

5. Based on the geo-lookup information for the IP addresses, the CyberTipline Reports were sent to Kentucky State Police and Fort Campbell Army CID (“Army CID”) for further investigative efforts. Investigative efforts revealed the likely user of the accounts was Cole HESTER, a member of the United States Army. In July 2020, Army CID determined HESTER departed Fort Campbell, Kentucky, for a temporary duty assignment at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

6. After reviewing the suspected CSAM in the provided Cybertip, Army CID obtained a search authorization for HESTER’s residence and vehicle located at Fort Knox in July 2020. As a result of the search, Army CID located and seized several electronic devices including phones and a laptop.

7. Army CID conducted forensic exams on the digital devices seized from HESTER including an iPhone XS, iPhone 5S, iPhone 7, and laptop. A review of the devices revealed information identifying HESTER as the primary user of these devices. Artifacts recovered referenced the screen/usernames, IP addresses, and/or email addresses listed in the CyberTipline Reports. Numerous images and videos depicting suspected CSAM were found on the devices. An

¹¹ Although the complete phone number and date of birth were provided, this information has been redacted in anticipation of the Complaint becoming public.

example of the examination showed the following: Army CID Exhibit 5 (iPhone 7 Model A1778): The examination of the Apple iPhone 7 Cellular Phone provided conclusive information identifying HESTER as the primary device user. Exhibit 5 contained artifacts linking the device to the IPv4 address (68.32.254.9), email address (coetrain1010@yahoo.com), and Snapchat user (c.hester), listed on the NCMEC CyberTipline report. Exhibit 5 contained pictures and videos containing CSAM and other media files of interest. The filenames, saved directories, and chat logs indicated a majority of the contraband media files were obtained via Telegram and Instagram. (Agent's note: Telegram provides end-to-end encrypted voice and video calls and optional end-to-end encrypted "secret" chats. Cloud chats and groups are encrypted between the app and the server, so that ISPs and other third-parties on the network can't access data, but the Telegram server can. Users can send text and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share an unlimited number of images, documents (2 GB per file), user locations, animated stickers, contacts, and audio files.) A review of chat logs disclosed appeared HESTER traded, sold, and purchased sexually explicit content from other individuals and was a participant in group chats wherein individuals discussed child exploitation. The chat logs also indicated HESTER and other individuals traded access to CSAM saved in cloud storage by exchanging Dropbox and Mega.nz URL links. (Agent's note: MEGA is a cloud storage and file hosting service offered by MEGA Limited, a company based in Auckland, New Zealand). According to NCMEC CyberTipline Report #74062155, Dropbox reported user coetrain1010@yahoo.com uploaded a CSAM picture (Photo Mar 13, 05 33 55.jpg) at 06-23-2020 19:53:54 UTC. A review of data containing timestamps on 23 June 20 UTC multiple CSAM images.

8. In September of 2021, I opened an investigation and contacted Special Agent Anthony Wingate of Army CID. Special Agent Wingate completed the forensic examination in

this case and found copious amounts of CSAM on HESTER's seized devices. HESTER's primary residence/duty assignment was Fort Campbell, Kentucky and Tennessee; however, CID collected the digital media while Hester was on temporary duty assignment (TDY) at Fort Knox. Agents discovered HESTER resided at an identified address at Fort Campbell, KY and an identified address on the Tennessee side of Fort Campbell, which is in the Middle District of Tennessee, prior to the TDY at Fort Knox. Army CID SA Wingate then provided a copy of the suspect material for review by HSI and FBI Nashville. I, along with other agents including FBI Special Agent Carla Rexing, reviewed the device extractions as part of the investigation into potential child pornography offenses.

9. During the review of the content provided, agents discovered over 5,000 imagery files in image and video format that appear to be child pornography. A sampling of the reviewed files includes the following:

- a. File name: **telegram-cloud-document-1-5145613593634406594.mp4**: This video file is 5 minutes and 43 seconds in length. The video depicts a nude adult female binding a nude female toddler's feet to a metal pole and taping the toddler's mouth shut. The adult female then hangs the toddler from the metal pole on a stand with the child hanging upside down and begins to torture the toddler and the toddler's genitals. This file has a created date of 12/8/2019. Both the toddler and the adult female's faces are visible in the video. (SHA-1:7A6DF4AB388E6750E4434B639F3F8C615BC47D55)
- b. File name: **telegram-cloud-document-1-5145613593634406595.mp4**: This video file is 1 minute and 8 seconds in length. The video depicts an adult female partially clothed in the front seat of a vehicle holding a toddler and breast feeding the toddler

while being filmed by an adult male. As the video pans to the back seat of the vehicle, the video depicts a female toddler, wearing a pink shirt with a pink heart on it. The adult male then places his penis in the mouth of the toddler female in the back seat of the vehicle. This file has a create date of 12/8/2019. The adult female and both toddler's faces are visible in the video. The adult male's face is not visible. (SHA-1:A08999CBE67182E9FC3F3D20089F0482E391CA64)

- c. File name: **record_000011.avi**: This video file is 5 minutes and 5 seconds in length. The video depicts a female toddler nude from the waist down lying on a blanket or towel. An adult male is placing his penis in the mouth of the toddler and a short time later begins to digitally penetrate the toddler. The toddler's face is visible in the video. The male's face is not visible. This file has a created date of 3/27/2020. (SHA-1:66D9A51AAD5BA69E9D64872CDC643057946BD2D0)

10. Based on the foregoing, I submit that there is probable cause to believe that HESTER has committed the offenses of receipt and distribution of child pornography, in violation of Title 18, United States Code § 2252A(a)(2); and possession of child pornography in violation of Title 18, United States Code § 2252A(a)(5)(B). I request that a warrant be issued for his arrest.